

Message Text

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SUBJECT:INR ASSESSMENT OF PORTUGAL SINCE THE ABORTIVE COUP

REFTEL: SECTO 271

1. IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST CONTAINED IN REFTEL, WE SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING ANALYSIS OF RECENT EVENTS IN PORTUGAL.

2. AS A RESULT OF THE BIZARRE INEPT, AND UNSUCCESSFUL COUP ATTEMPT OF MARCH 11, PORTUGAL HAS MOVED SHARPLY IN THE DIRECTION OF A LEFTIST MILITARY DICTATORSHIP. THE WAY IN WHICH THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM) LEADERSHIP HAS RE-

SPONDED TO THE ABORTIVE COUP POINTS TO CONTINUING, TIGHTENED RULE BY LEFTIST MILITARY OFFICERS, SOME OF WHOM ARE HIGHLY TOLERANT OF OR INFLUENCED BY--THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY MEMBERS OF--THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

3. WITH RESPECT TO FOREIGN POLICY:

--(A) THE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK HAVE BROUGHT THE STRENGTHENING OF AFM LEADERSHIP ELEMENTS, ESPECIALLY PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES AND GENERAL CARVALHO, WHO HAVE A MARKED SUSPICION OF THE US; A STRONG BIAS TOWARD THIRD WORLD CAUSES; AND A PRONOUNCED LEFTIST BENT.

--(B) THE GOVERNMENT DID REAFFIRM YESTERDAY ITS DETERMINATION TO COMPLY WITH PORTUGAL'S INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND AGREEMENTS. GIVEN THE PRIORITY OF DOMESTIC CONCERNS, WE DOUBT THAT THE AFM'S LEADERS WILL BE ABLE SOON TO DEVOTE MUCH TIME TO RECONSIDERATION OF FOREIGN POLICY. WHEN THEY DO, HOWEVER, PORTUGAL'S TIES TO NATO AND THE US PRESENCE IN THE AZORES ARE LIKELY TO BE CALLED INTO QUESTION.

4. EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND DURING THE COUP ATTEMPT REMAIN MURKY, BUT IT WAS APPARENTLY MOUNTED BY A SMALL RIGHTIST AFM MINORITY, WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OR EVEN KNOWLEDGE OF THE LARGE MODERATE MAJORITY. WHETHER THE MOVE WAS AN OUT-AND-OUT COUP ATTEMPT OR AN ENDEAVOR TO PRE-EMPT A PERCEIVED IMMINENT THREAT FROM THE LEFT, THE EFFECT HAS BEEN TO DISENGAGE THE INCREASINGLY STRONG
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MODERATE BRAKE ON THE AFM LEFTISTS AND TO PLACE SERIOUS, IF NOT INSURMOUNTABLE, OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF A RESURGENCE BY THE MODERATE AFM MAJORITY.

--(A) IT ENHANCED THE CREDIBILITY OF THE LEFT'S CONTENTION THAT THE REAL DANGER TO PORTUGAL IS FROM THE RIGHT.

--(B) IT PROVIDED AFM LEFTISTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO

DISCREDIT MODERATE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERS, WHETHER OR NOT INVOLVED IN THE ATTEMPT AND SOME HAVE BEEN ARRESTED.

5. LEFTIST AFM LEADERS HAVE MOVED RAPIDLY TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSITION. IN A GOVERNMENTAL REORGANIZATION THAT IS STILL UNDER WAY, THE JUNTA OF NATIONAL SALVATION AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE HAVE BEEN ABOLISHED, AND THEIR POWERS HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO A NEWLY CREATED REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (RC). THE RC, WHICH WILL HAVE BROAD EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE POWERS, WILL CLEARLY BE THE REAL GUIDING FORCE AND FINAL ARBITER IN THE GOVERNMENT.

6. THE COMPOSITION OF THE RC HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED, BUT IT WILL PROBABLY CONSIST OF THE 7 MEMBERS OF THE NOW DISBANDED JUNTA OF NATIONAL SALVATION, THE 7 MEMBERS OF THE AFM'S LEFTIST COORDINATING COMMITTEE, AND OTHER AFM LEADERS SUCH AS PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES AND GENERAL CARVALHO. THE RC, THEN, WILL HAVE A DECIDEDLY LEFTIST

COLORATION, WITH MODERATE REPRESENTATION LIMITED TO PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES AND PERHAPS A FEW OTHER SENIOR MILITARY MEN. THE ABILITY OF COSTA GOMES, WHO MAINTAINED A VERY LOW PROFILE DURING THE COUP ATTEMPT AND ITS AFTERMATH, TO REVIVE AND LEAD THE MODERATES IS OPEN TO SERIOUS QUESTION.

7. FURTHER GOVERNMENTAL CHANGES ARE EXPECTED. A CABINET RESHUFFLE IS ALMOST CERTAIN.

8. THE AFM HAS REAFFIRMED ITS COMMITMENT TO THE HOLDING OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ON APRIL 12, BUT THE RESULTS WILL BE FAR LESS MEANINGFUL THAN WAS HOPED BECAUSE
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SE THE AFM'S LEADERS HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THEY INTEND TO RUN THE COUNTRY WHATEVER THE OUTCOME.

9. MOREOVER, THE POLITICAL PARTY SCENE IS IN DISARRAY. MODERATE PARTIES HAVE BEEN INTIMIDATED.

--(A) THE IMPORTANT AND POTENTIALLY STRONG CENTER-RIGHT COALITION OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC) AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER (CDS) WILL PROBABLY BE BANNED BY THE AFM. THESE TWO PARTIES ARE UNDER SEVERE ATTACK FROM THE LEFT FOR ALLEGED COMPLICITY IN THE COUP ATTEMPT, AND HEADQUARTERS OF BOTH PARTIES HAVE BEEN RANSACKED BY MOBS.

--(B) IF THESE TWO PARTIES ARE BANNED, THE CENTER-LEFT POPULAR DEMOCRATS (PPD) WOULD BE LEFT AS THE ONLY PERMISS-

SIBLE PARTY TO THE RIGHT OF THE SOCIALISTS AND WOULD BE
SUBJECTED TO EVEN MORE HARASSMENT THAN THEY HAVE BEEN IN
THE PAST.

--(C) THE SOCIALISTS ARE ALARMED AND ARE ATTEMPTING TO
ESTABLISH A MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE COMMUNISTS (PCP) AL-
THOUGH THIS REPORTEDLY WILL NOT INCLUDE THE PRESENTATION
OF A UNIFIED COMMUNIST-SOCIALIST SLATE OF CANDIDATES.
THIS ATTEMPT TO PAPER OVER DIFFERENCES WITH THE PCP IS A
BASIC REVERSAL OF SOCIALIST POLICY. UP TO NOW, THE
SOCIALISTS HAD TRIED TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM THE
COMMUNISTS AND ATTACK THEM ON A BROAD SPECTRUM OF ISSUES.

--(D)
COMMUNISTS AND COMMUNIST-FRONT PORTUGUESE DEMO-
CRATIC MOVEMENT HAVE TAKEN PARTICULAR SATISFACTION IN
THE AFM'S REACTION TO THE ABORTIVE ATTEMPT AND ARE CER-

TAIN TO INTENSIFY THEIR EFFORTS SO AS TO IDENTIFY AS
CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE WITH THE AFM AND ITS PROGRAM.

10. BECAUSE OF THE WIDESPREAD UNCERTAINTY THAT CHARA-
CTERIZES THE POLITICAL SCENE, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT
HOW THE ELECTION WILL TURN OUT. BY DISCREDITING THE
CENTER-RIGHT COALITION, THE AFM COULD ENSURE A VERY STRONG
SHOWING BY THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS. HOWEVER, IF THE MORE
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CONSERVATIVE CITIZENRY IS INTIMIDATED AND STAYS AWAY FROM
THE POLLS, THE RESULT COULD BE A STRONGER-THAN-EXPECTED
SHOWING BY THE COMMUNISTS, WHO UNTIL THE COUP ATTEMPT
HAD NOT BEEN EXPECTED TO GAIN MORE THAN 20 PERCENT OF THE
VOTE.

11. THE ONLY SPECIFIC ECONOMIC POLICY STATEMENT TO EMERGE
FROM THE AFM LEADERSHIP THIS WEEK WAS THE ANNOUNCEMENT,
IN THE WAKE OF THE ARRESTS OF A NUMBER OF LEADING BANKERS
AND INDUSTRIALISTS FOR COMPLICITY IN THE COUP ATTEMPT,
THAT PORTUGAL'S MAJOR BANKS HAD BEEN NATIONALIZED. THIS
MOVE, ADVOCATED FOR SOME TIME BY THE COMMUNISTS, IS A
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11RADICAL DEPARTURE FROM THE RECENTLY APPROVED ECONOMIC
PROGRAM, WHICH HAD BEEN CONSIDERED A VICTORY FOR THE
MODERATES. THE NATIONALIZATION REFLECTS THE WIDESPREAD
HOSTILITY TOWARD THE PORTUGUESE OLIGARCHY, WHICH CON-
TROLS THE BANKS AND RELATED INDUSTRIES AND IS SO CLOSELY
IDENTIFIED WITH THE SALAZAR-CAETANO REGIME.

12. CONTINUING STATES OF MILITARY ALERT AND WILD RUMORS OF ADDITIONAL MOVES AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT TESTIFY TO THE SUSTAINED STATE OF UNEASE AND UNCERTAINTY IN LISBON. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO HARD INFORMATION TO INDICATE THAT ANOTHER ATTEMPT IS IN THE WORKS, SUCH A MOVE CANNOT BE RULED OUT.

13. THE MARCH 11 ATTEMPT APPEARS TO HAVE FAILED BECAUSE IT WAS POORLY ORGANIZED, ILL-TIMED, AND FAILED TO ELICIT MOVES ON THE PART OF OTHER MILITARY UNITS WHICH WOULD HAVE HAD TO JOIN IN THE ATTEMPT IN ORDER FOR IT TO SUCCEED. GIVEN THE APPARENT LACK OF SYMPATHY IN OTHER UNITS, AND THE APPARENTLY EFFECTIVE MANNER IN WHICH THE AFM LEADERSHIP HAS TIGHTENED ITS CONTROL SINCE MARCH 11, WE BELIEVE THAT THE CHANCES ARE SLIGHT OF ANY COUP ATTEMPT SUCCEEDING IN THE NEAR FUTURE. INGERSOLL UNQUOTE

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